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INAUGURAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY THE

REV. STEPHEN OLIN,

PRESIDENT OF

RANDOLPH-MACON COLLEGE,

ON THE OCCASION OF HIS

INDUCTION INTO OFFICE.

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ADDRESS.

In obedience to a custom made respectable by many high examples, I avail myself of the present occasion when I am about to enter upon the responsible duties to which I have been called by the guardians of this institution, to express my sentiments upon some of the topics embraced in the great subject of Collegiate education. Of education itself in its general and broad signification, comprehending all the physical, intellectual and moral training by which a human being is prepared, during the years of childhood and youth, for the duties and events of subsequent life, I do not propose to speak. Its momentous importance, and its manifold relations to the improvement and happiness of our race, could not fail to engage the attention of the wisest men of every civilized age and nation, and the profound research and patient experiments of former metaphysicians and teachers have left nothing valuable to be gained in the field of original enquiry; not even the humble distinction of obtaining for familiar truths a fresh and cordial welcome, by the graceful blandishments of more polished language or more attractive illustration. But if we are denied all participation in the renown of discovery, the highest intellectual powers may find ample and worthy employment in explaining the principles which our predecessors have so firmly established; in reducing to practice the lessons they have inculcated; in modifying to the ever varying aspects and exigencies of human society the systems which they have so skilfully elaborated; in supplying such deficiencies as the lapse of centuries has detected or produced, and in making such improvements as the accumulated experience of past generations or the increasing wants of the present may demand.

We do no injustice to those who have filled the busy scenes of life before us, when we affirm that the present time

is signalized above any other period in the history of the world, by vigorous and comprehensive efforts to elevate the intellectual condition of our species. A lively interest is felt upon this subject throughout nearly all the christian nations of Europe and America, and whilst the means of elementary and liberal instruction are enjoyed to an extent unknown to Greece and Rome, in the proudest days of their literary greatness, we have good reason to indulge in the most cheering anticipations of future improvement. All the political changes which have occurred in the old and the new world, though followed by occasional disasters, have resulted in raising large masses of the people to consideration and power ; and the most despotic rulers cannot and dare not withhold from their subjects the blessings of education, when once they are endowed with the immunities of freemen.

The general diffusion of knowledge, whether produced by the progress of liberty or by other causes, leads by sure and obvious tendencies to the establishment and support of the higher seminaries of learning. It multiplies the aspirants for literary distinction and the rewards and employments of literary men. It discovers latent genius and slumbering ambition and directs them to Colleges and Universities, as the proper field for their cultivation and display. Common education produces intellectual tastes and wants in a community, and these must be supplied by the labours of educated men. The works of able writers are appreciated and their efforts rewarded. The periodical press is rescued from the control of the incompetent, and accomplished scholars are required to preside over the current literature of the day.—Well instructed teachers are encouraged, and a demand is created for cultivated professional talent.

The great improvements which have been made in the mechanical arts, and in some of the physical sciences, are exerting an influence upon the cause of liberal education not less salutary and encouraging than that which emanates from the progress of popular instruction. The subjection of some of the most efficient agents of nature to human control and to the

purposes of civilized life, has increased the powers and multiplied the resources of man to an incalculable extent. The slow and vexatious processes of manufacturing industry, which were carried on by the incessant toil of thousands of intelligent beings, are superseded by the invention of machinery. New facilities of transport and intercourse have doubled the rewards of labor and carried competence and affluence to the most interior and remote portions of the commercial world. These great improvements, whilst they have augmented the physical comforts of a large portion of the human family, beyond the most sanguine hopes of the most visionary philanthropist, are extending a benignant patronage to literature and science. Multitudes, relieved from the necessity of toiling for subsistence, devote their energies to ennobling intellectual pursuits. The spirit of liberality keeps pace with the diffusion of wealth, and new institutions of learning reared and endowed by private munificence, animate the hopes and foster the genius of an aspiring generation. Mechanical skill and commercial enterprise are thus made subsidiary to intellectual improvement. The spinning jenny and the steam engine constitute the richest endowments of our Schools and Colleges and Arkwright and Watt are the true Maecenases of the age.

The friends of education, it will be perceived, do not derive their confidence of success from any transient excitement, but from the deep and living sources of individual and national prosperity, and it behoves the men who form the character and control the destinies of those literary institutions which are every where rising up to meet the increasing demand for liberal instruction, to be mindful of the sacred trust which they exercise for their cotemporaries and for posterity. The duties which they are called to perform are rendered peculiarly difficult by the circumstances of the times. A spirit of daring innovation is abroad. Questions which have long been regarded as settled are started afresh, and systems, which have stood the test of centuries, are condemned as false in their principles or inefficient in their operation. Now whilst we admit that the cause of education may be as deep-

ly injured by a stubborn adherence to ancient usages, in contempt of all improvement, as by a restless and an ambitious propensity to change, it may be safely affirmed that to a new institution the latter is the more dangerous error. In entering upon the honorable career of competition and usefulness with older establishments, it is beset with a strong temptation to throw out the lure of some specious pretension, or to announce its claim to some valuable discovery in the science of teaching, as needful auxiliaries in the unequal contest for reputation and patronage. After all due praise has been bestowed upon the adventurous and original genius of the age, it must still be confessed that the most valuable lessons are those of experience; and that literary institution lays the broadest foundation for extensive usefulness and permanent respectability, which shows a proper deference for the wisdom of the past whilst it cautiously but promptly conforms its subjects and modes of instruction to the present condition of society. The boldest innovators, who deem every thing vicious that is old and all that is new an improvement, will at least allow us the exercise of a sound discretion, in choosing between the rival novelties that press upon our acceptance; and those who are most intent upon revolution would probably hesitate to remodel our colleges upon the phrenological hypothesis of Gall and Spurzheim.

A question of great importance is involved in prescribing the studies which should constitute a course of liberal instruction. It may be regarded a fundamental principle, that little reference can be had in making the selection to the particular employments to which the pupil may be destined on the termination of his academic career. The choice of a profession is usually and wisely postponed till the progress of education and the formation of character have developed the intellectual aptitudes and moral qualities by which the preference should ever be controlled. If we were even endowed with a foresight that would enable us to anticipate the conclusions of experience and direct the studies of youth with immediate and primary reference to the pursuits of manhood,

all the principles of a sound, mental philosophy would forbid the adoption of a system so erroneous in theory and so essentially vicious in its operation. The mind, like the body, has its infancy and its childhood, when its habits are unformed and its energies feebly and imperfectly developed ; and a plan of early education which aims at special and isolated objects, is likely to mar the symmetry and disturb the harmonious proportions of its faculties, by giving to some an undue cultivation to the neglect or injury of the rest. The pernicious tendency of professional studies, early commenced and exclusively pursued, has long been acknowledged, and if the evil will not admit of an adequate remedy, it at least should not be aggravated by subjecting the flexible minds of youth to a depraving influence which proves too strong for the more hardy and unyielding powers of manhood.

What then is the principle that should guide us in choosing the studies of a collegiate course? Their tendency to enlarge, invigorate and discipline the mind. Their utility in relation to the business of life is an important but secondary and inferior consideration.

The Mathematics combine, in a high degree, the various attributes which are desirable in academic studies, and they are eminently entitled to the place assigned them by common consent in every judicious system of liberal education. They strengthen the memory and improve the reasoning faculties. They habituate the mind to protracted and difficult efforts of attention, and to the clear and lively perception of truth, and at the same time furnish it with principles and facts of inestimable value in many of the departments of useful industry and philosophical research. They enrich the student with the highest rewards of application : education and science ; mental improvement and useful knowledge.

The Grecian and Roman Languages have for centuries shared with the Mathematics an undisputed pre-eminence in the circle of liberal studies, and I can but consider as an evil omen the growing scepticism of the times in reference to their utility and importance. The antiquity of their claims

upon our regard makes them but the more obnoxious to the prejudices of our practical and reforming age ; yet some deference is justly due to the unanimous sentiments of former generations, and some hesitation may be reasonably indulged at rejecting the lights which have cheered the human intellect in the darkest periods of its history, and guided it in the career of its most splendid achievements. It should never be forgotten that the language of Greece has been, from the days of Homer, a principal instrument in diffusing knowledge and civilization over large portions of the globe. The ravages of Alexander's wars were speedily repaired by the benignant influence of Grecian literature and arts, which, in a single century, raised Egypt and Asia to the zenith of their intellectual glory. The wisest of the Romans acknowledge that their country and language were essentially barbarous till the influx of Grecian books and scholars, which followed the conquest of Macedonia, roused the slumbering genius and subdued the ferocity of a warlike but illiterate people. During the dark ages, the remains of classical literature embalmed and preserved whatever of knowledge and refinement had survived the ruins of the Roman empire, and became, at a more fortunate era, the true restorers of learning.

Throughout the whole progress of modern literature from its dawn to its present state of maturity and comparative perfection, classical learning has been its safest guide, and its most liberal benefactor. With an unalterable constancy it has held forth its masterly performances and authoritative examples to human observation, to correct the eccentricities of genius ; to restrain the aberrations of taste, and to rebuke the waywardness of imagination and the extravagancies of fashion. Its graceful specimens of eloquence and poetry ; of style and sentiment, embody and exemplify the immutable laws of composition and of the mind. They constitute an unexceptionable standard of good writing, above envy or controversy, which acts at once as the inspirer and the counsellor of genius ; the model and the test of excellence.

If these considerations are entitled to respect we ought to

pause before we consent to proscribe the classics even in favor of other studies which might be better adapted to some of the purposes of education. But those who would discard the ancient languages propose no valuable substitute, and it may be safely concluded that none is likely to be found which an intelligent and experienced man would be willing to accept. But classical learning must not be left to the support of this negative argument. Its strongest claim to occupy a conspicuous place in the circle of liberal studies, is founded upon its admirable adaptation to the powers and wants of the youthful mind. The learned languages give useful employment to the intellectual faculties at a period when they are incompetent to more abstract and severe occupations. They call up the attention to such short and easy but repeated efforts as are best calculated to correct its wanderings and increase its energies. The mind is accustomed to analysis and comparison, and its powers of discrimination are improved by frequent exercises in declension, inflexion and derivation, and by the constant necessity that is imposed upon it of deciding between the claims of rival definitions. The memory is engaged in the performance of such tasks as are precisely fitted for its development, and the judgment and other reasoning faculties find ample and invigorating employment in the application of grammatical rules and the investigation of philosophical principles.

Whilst the classical student secures in an eminent degree, the most valuable ends of education in the discipline of his intellectual faculties, his labors are amply rewarded by the acquisition of valuable knowledge. It is not true, as is often asserted, that the classics impart nothing to the mind but a dry vocabulary of obsolete words and idioms, utterly useless for all the purposes of speech and reason. Language as well as mind and matter, has its philosophy, not formed to suit particular cases, but applicable, with few modifications, to the dialects of all ages and nations. The regularity, the copiousness, the elegant refinement, and the profound logic of the Greek and Roman tongues give facilities for the in-

vestigation of these universal laws, unknown to the defective and anomalous languages of modern times, and the youth who has once thoroughly mastered the difficulties and the mysteries of classical literature, has imbibed those unchangeable principles of speech and of thought which are alone able to guide him on the great occasions in active life, when eloquence and reason exert a controlling influence.

The value of classical learning, as the means of obtaining a critical knowledge of the English language, and of forming a correct and graceful style of composition, is often acknowledged by those who deny it all other praise. As far as our own language is derived from those of Greece and Rome, the connexion is sufficiently intelligible, but the study of the ancient tongues facilitates the attainment of excellence in speaking and writing by an influence which is less obvious. The exercise of translation from the classical writers is the happiest and most effectual method ever devised of acquiring a critical, extensive and thorough acquaintance with our mother tongue. The student is led to a careful examination of all the peculiarities, and a thorough trial of all the capabilities of the language which is to become the new vehicle of thought. He must observe the minutest differences in the import of words, and his ingenuity is often tasked to the utmost in selecting and combining such terms and expressions, from the crude and unyielding elements of his native tongue, as may dispaty the sentiments of the original, with the precise form and coloring which they possessed in a more copious, flexible and significant language. Such exercises, often repeated and properly directed by a skilful teacher, seldom fail of giving to the classical student, together with the more important advantages of intellectual discipline and polish, a more valuable acquaintance with his native tongue than could have been obtained in the same period of exclusive devotion to its study.

To the assertion so often repeated that the study of ancient literature exerts an irreligious and demoralizing influence upon the minds of youth, an objection frequently entitled to

respect from the motives and character of those who urge it, it may be sufficient to offer this passing reply : that the absurd mythology of the Greek and Roman writers, so far from enlisting the affections and winning the belief of young persons, is usually found to excite their contempt to an extent prejudicial to their progress in learning ; that classical scholars have not been remarkable, above others, for infidel sentiments or immoral lives, and that they who propose to substitute for the ancient languages a more extensive course of mathematical and natural sciences, should enquire if these have not, with more frequency and equal justice, been charged with a similar tendency.

The progress of knowledge or the love of novelty may produce considerable changes, but it may be confidently anticipated that the study of classical literature and of the different branches of pure and mixed Mathematics will continue to be regarded of essential and transcendent importance in every enlightened system of liberal education. Next to these I am inclined to give a place to intellectual philosophy, though its claims are not so fully established. The fluctuating hypotheses of the metaphysicians, and their ambitious and perverse ingenuity have thrown unmerited suspicion upon the science. Its great outlines however are distinctly marked. Its essential facts and fundamental principles are secured upon the legitimate basis of careful observation and patient, comprehensive induction. This study is usually postponed to an advanced period in the collegiate term, when the student is presumed to possess the indispensable qualifications of a critical knowledge of language, some maturity of judgment and considerable mental discipline. When aided by all these advantages, the task imposed is fully equal to his powers. It calls him to the most abstract and profound investigations. It familiarizes him with the laws and the phenomena of mind, and with such efforts of subtle analysis and difficult combination as are best fitted to enlarge and fill the grasp of the highest intellectual capacities.

The important but secondary consideration of practical

utility must be allowed to operate more freely in selecting subordinate studies. Composition and eloquence are entitled to a large share of attention from their connexion with literary reputation and professional success; Moral Philosophy, from its relation to human conduct and happiness; Chemistry and Natural Philosophy, from their important applications to the business of life. Some branches of experimental and physical science, which are of too much importance to be wholly neglected, can be prosecuted only by the aid of such instruments and collections as are not usually to be found except at the public institutions of learning. This may often be a sufficient reason for devoting some portion of time to objects which have no peculiar adaptation to the principal ends of intellectual education. Circumstances of a more transient and local character may give to a study peculiar and indisputable claims. The French language is so interwoven with fashionable literature, and has obtained such celebrity as the medium of social and national intercourse, that an institution of learning would be deemed incomplete which made no provision for giving instruction in this department. A college designed for the accommodation of a country abounding in minerals, might be accused of supplying the public wants inadequately, if it overlooked geology and mineralogy in its prescribed instructions.

It must never be forgotten, however that the objects of human knowledge are infinitely diversified, whilst the powers of the human mind are limited, and only a brief portion of life can be devoted to education. I am not aware that any serious attempt has been made to prolong the usual collegiate term. Several colleges have unwisely abridged it, and the condition of our country, the genius of its political institutions and especially our laws of inheritance, all tend to the encouragement of that system of education which will most speedily send forth the unportioned youth upon the bustling theatre where his fortunes are to be achieved. But whilst no addition has been made, or is likely to be made to the season allotted to mental cultivation, and whilst the prere-

quisites to admission into college remain essentially the same, our institutions are annually swelling the catalogue of their studies and sending them forth with rival zeal, in the guise of new claims upon public confidence and patronage. It is time to enquire whether this eager race is a race of improvement; whether, with the new tasks which have been imposed upon the youthful mind, new methods have been discovered to stimulate its industry, to multiply its resources or to elude the toils that frequent the paths of learning. These remarks have no reference to Universities which profess to give instruction in all the branches of knowledge and open their doors to professional students as well as to those in literature and science. But the excessive multiplication of studies which are prescribed as conditions of graduation can, in no conceivable way, promote the interests of education. When the time and capacity of the student are already sufficiently tasked, it is manifest that without some miraculous endowment, he can only learn a new science by neglecting an old one. The industry which was profitably directed to a few, may be divided amongst a multitude of objects, but it will incur the inevitable penalty of fitful and dissipated intellectual exertion—superficial attainments and vicious intellectual habits.

In what may be denominated the art of education, general principles are of less consequence than the personal qualities of the instructor. Learning, diligence, aptness to teach, enthusiasm in the pursuit of science, with the happy talent of imparting it to others, when guided and sustained by a conscientious regard for the moral bearing and responsibilities of his office, constitute a rare assemblage of advantages which leaves nothing to be desired in the character and qualifications of a teacher. The subject of lectures, however, though of secondary interest is worthy of some attention. The only question with which we have at present any concern is the adaptation of this method of instruction to the condition of our colleges, where boys are admitted at fourteen or fifteen years of age, and are usually graduated before their majority.

No argument is necessary to show that modes of communicating knowledge, which have been found useful in schools of medicine or theology, where the student has arrived at the age of manhood and is presumed to have passed through a preparatory course of education, may yet be wholly inapplicable to the very different circumstances of those who frequent our literary institutions. Here, at least, lecturing can never be a substitute for frequent recitations from well digested text books. These introduce the teacher to an intimate acquaintance with the intellectual peculiarities of his pupils, and enable him to accommodate his instructions to the wants of every mind. Opportunity is given for inculcation, and for ascertaining and removing difficulties. Obscure subjects may be made clear by new and more appropriate illustration, and what is defective or unsatisfactory may be supplied by additional arguments. The energies of the student are roused and his industry stimulated. He can recur again and again to his text book, to perfect the views which, through oversight or haste, were erroneous or superficial. None of these advantages belong to the opposite system. No reference can be had by the lecturer to diversity of capacity and knowledge. No opportunity is given for inquiries or explanations. If a sentiment is lost through defective utterance, or wandering attention, or dull perception, it is lost irrecoverably.

A method of teaching which is liable to these objections must be essentially unfit for the ordinary purposes of collegiate instruction. Occasionally, however, and to a limited extent, it may be resorted to with advantage. Human knowledge is never stationary, and in the progress of discovery and opinion the text books of every science become defective or obsolete. These deficiencies must be supplied by the living teacher whose instructions should always keep pace with improvement. In those branches of learning which are illustrated by experiments, the explanations of the professor may sometimes, conveniently assume the form of written lectures. Whatever may be the subject of investigation, whether phi-

losophy, classical literature or morals, the most able teacher will often have occasion for all his erudition and eloquence in supplying the omissions and imperfections of text books; in solving difficulties; in critical exegesis, and in the various efforts which genius or experience may suggest for rendering a recitation profitable or interesting.

Instruction by lectures has long been preferred in the Universities of Scotland. In those of England, the opposite method has generally prevailed. If, in the absence of many of the facts which could guide us to a satisfactory settlement of the question, we might venture to form an opinion of the comparative operation of these two modes of teaching, from the history of the Universities and of the literature of these two countries for the last century, we should be led to the unexpected but not improbable conclusion, that the lecture system is more favorable to the improvement of the professor and the reputation of the University, whilst the opposite method has been more productive of thorough and accomplished scholars.

In porportion as virtue is more valuable than knowledge, pure and enlightened morality will be regarded by every considerate father the highest recommendation of a literary institution. The youth is withdrawn from the salutary restraints of parental influence and authority and committed to other guardians, at a time of life most decisive of his prospects and destinies. The period devoted to education usually impresses its own character upon all his future history. Vigilant supervision, employment, and seclusion from all facilities and temptations to vice, are the ordinary and essential securities which every institution of learning is bound to provide for the sacred interests which are committed to its charge. But safeguards and negative provisions are not sufficient. The tendencies of our nature are retrograde, and they call for the interposition of positive remedial influences. The most perfect human society speedily degenerates, if the active agencies which were employed in its elevation are once withdrawn or suspended. What then can be expected of

inexperienced youth, sent forth from the pure atmosphere of domestic piety, and left to the single support of its own untested and unsettled principles, in the midst of circumstances which often prove fatal to the most practiced virtue ! I frankly confess that I see no safety but in the preaching of the cross, and in a clear and unfaltering exhibition of the doctrines and sanctions of christianity. The beauty and excellence of virtue are excusable topics, though they must ever be inefficient motives, with those who reject the authority of revelation ; but in a christian land, morality divorced from religion is the emptiest of all the empty names by which a deceitful philosophy has blinded and corrupted the world. I venture to affirm, that this generation has not given birth to another absurdity so monstrous as that which would exclude from our seminaries of learning the open and vigorous inculcation of the religious faith which is acknowledged by our whole population, and which pervades every one of our free institutions. Our governors and legislators, and all the depositaries of honor and trust are prohibited from exercising their humblest functions till they have pledged their fidelity to the country upon the holy gospels. The most inconsiderable pecuniary interest is regarded too sacred to be entrusted to the most upright judge or juror, or to the most unsuspected witness, till their integrity has been fortified by an appeal to the high sanctions of christianity. Even the exercise of the elective franchise is usually suspended upon the same condition. The interesting moralities of the domestic relations ; the laws of marriage and divorce ; the mutual obligations of parents and children, are all borrowed from the christian scriptures. The fears of the vicious and the hopes of the upright ; the profane ribaldry of the profligate, no less than the humble thanksgiving of the morning and evening sacrifice, do homage to the gospel as the religion of the American people. Our eloquence and our poetry ; our periodical and popular literature in all their varieties ; the novel, the tale, the ballad, the play, all make their appeal to the deep sentiments of religion that pervade the popular bosom. Christianity is our

birthright. It is the richest inheritance bequeathed us by our noble fathers. It is mingled in our hearts with all the fountains of sentiment and of faith. And are the guardians of public education alone "halting between two opinions?" Do they think that in fact, and for practical purposes, the truth of christianity is still a debateable question? Is it still a question whether the generations yet to rise up and occupy the wide domains of this great empire; to be the representatives of our name, our freedom and our glory, before the nations of the earth, shall be a christian or an infidel people? Can wise and practical men who are engaged in rearing up a temple of learning to form the character and destinies of their posterity, for a moment hesitate to make "Jesus Christ the chief corner stone?"

An experiment is about to be made upon a scale of extent and magnificence, that must give to its lessons the most imposing and decisive character. An American citizen has bequeathed his name and the splendid fruits of his industry, to a college for instructing the youth of a christian metropolis, from which christianity, in all its ordinances and visible exhibitions, is excluded by a fundamental law. We need not anticipate the awards of the future, nor permit gloomy apprehensions to mingle with our admiration of the most signal act of individual liberality recorded in history. Whatever of evil or of good may accrue to the cause of learning from this great enterprise, we may at least hope, that it will settle finally, for this whole country, and for posterity, what seems still to be regarded a doubtful question; whether christianity is a spontaneous production of the human passions; and whether pure morality can flourish in an infidel soil. Of those who are able to look upon this novel attempt, as the dawning triumph of just and liberal principles, it may reasonably be demanded that they wait for the result with patience. They must not indulge in a frivolous ambition to multiply these experiments. The souls of men are in the crucible, and humanity will grudge a wasteful consumption.

In institutions of learning which are endowed by the State,

an alternative is presented of considerable and acknowledged difficulty, in giving them such an organization as shall secure an efficient moral influence. The entire control must be given to a single religious sect, to the prejudice of all others, or by combining in the board of instruction the members of different churches, some hazard is incurred from rival interests and discordant counsels. In times when the principles of religious liberty were less understood, or less respected than at present, it was customary to commit the entire interest of education to the religious denomination most in favor with the public authorities; and the charters of several of our Colleges contain provisions requiring the President or other officers to be of a particular faith. This is a manifest violation of the principles of a free government; but the injustice is less in proportion as the religious opinions of a people approach uniformity, and as the preference is given to the most numerous sect. Exemption from the danger of possible collisions is not however, a boon of sufficient value, to be purchased by the smallest sacrifice of political rights or religious liberty; and a legislator or a trustee, who aids any religious denomination in gaining an ascendancy in the public institutions of learning, beyond the just proportions of its numbers and of its contributions to the public treasury, is unfaithful to the dearest interests of the people and to the constitution.

This monopoly of education, whether obtained by legal enactments, by management or accident, is a thousand times more odious than a system of tythes. It operates as a direct bounty for the encouragement of the favored church, and tends to a ruinous corruption of christianity. By a silent but unerring influence, it consigns the excluded sects to ignorance and obscurity, and, under the specious forms of liberty and equality, raises up at their expense, and upon their ruin, an intellectual and spiritual aristocracy. Dear as the interests of education are, the interests of freedom are dearer; and those who are the appointed guardians of our State institutions are bound by the most sacred obligations, to maintain the privileges of all the churches and all the people.—

The dangers of dissension in a mixed faculty, are doubtless exaggerated. Men who differ in their religious opinions, act together in other departments of life without inconvenience. An equitable adjustment of office and influence in colleges would call into operation new principles, and create new inducements to forbearance and fidelity. A sense of honor ; moral obligation, and a feeling of security, would constitute motives to harmony and usefulness, far more powerful than exclusive privileges and unjust proscriptions. Immunities, however unequal or unmerited, which are secured by legal enactments, should not be disturbed ; but it seems reasonable and just, that the State should extend its munificence to those portions of its citizens who have suffered by partial legislation, and aid them in their efforts to assert their unalienable rights and to secure for their children, the inestimable blessings of a liberal and virtuous education.

These general principles, which I have deemed worthy of discussion in reference to those literary institutions which are supported by public funds, have a modified application to such as have been endowed by individual bounty. No complaint is likely to arise against the religious influence and aspects of a college which is organized and controlled by the immediate agency of its founders and its patrons. No contest for denominational ascendancy can happen in the management of an interest which has, from the first, been avowedly identified with the exertions and liberality of a single church. It would, however, betray great ignorance of the ordinary principles of human action, to infer from this indisputable claim of supremacy, and this distinct and frank avowal of religious character, that such an institution is peculiarly liable to the operation of narrow and sectarian views. On the contrary, those who exercise none but unquestionable rights, and provoke neither jealousy nor opposition by arrogant assumptions, are left in quiet possession of the field, and soon lose the habit and the desire of controversy. It is in the collision of rival claims and interests, that the shades of difference which constitute lines of demarcation between the churches of the land, cover the whole field of vision, and

shut out from the view the important duties and principles of our common christianity. When no disturbing cause exists to divert the sentiments and the ministrations of religion from their natural channel, the minute and vexatious disputations of polemic theology are seldom heard. The great doctrines of the cross become the burthen of every appeal, and the pure moralities of the gospel are inculcated by opposing sects, with a zeal and unanimity that might shame and reclaim the bigot. Neither a controversial nor a proselyting spirit is indiginous to the peaceful abodes of ardent and enlightened piety. Little is gained, whilst much is often lost, by the disruption of those sacred ties which bind the son to the church of his pious Father. The stable foundations of religious education and hereditary faith are loosened. The warm sympathies of domestic piety are repressed, and he is grafted into a strange vine, destined too often to wither and die.

The obvious and intelligible motives of interest combine with the sentiments of piety, in giving to the parent the most ample securities against an improper interference with the religious faith of his son. Institutions whose only resources are public confidence and patronage, are not likely, rashly to alienate a friend or provoke an enemy.

The internal discipline of a college is a subject of great practical importance, as well as of great delicacy and difficulty. The regulations of society which fix the period of minority, are formed upon the constitution of nature, and the dictates of experience. The controlling authority of the parent is maintained, till the formation of proper habits, and some maturity of judgment, are presumed to have fitted the child for subjection to the positive institutions of society and the general restraints of moral obligation. In our places of learning, this period is usually anticipated, and this salutary arrangement disturbed. The youth passes from a government of authority and influence, to a government of laws, before he is prepared to appreciate the value and the reason of the restrictions that are imposed upon him, or to respect their sanctions. Dislike and contempt for regulations deemed frivolous or arbitrary; reckless indifference to consequences,

and practiced ingenuity in evading the penalty, whilst it violates the spirit of the law, are the too common results of this premature and unnatural substitution of positive enactments, for that discretionary power with which God has invested the parent. The evil is one of portentous magnitude, but it is not easy, perhaps not possible to prescribe a remedy. Much will unquestionably depend upon a proper selection of teachers. It may be regarded a settled maxim, not liable to more exceptions than other general rules, that the necessity of resorting to punishments will be rare, in proportion as the faculty possess that respectability and weight of character which result from high talents, from virtue, and fidelity in the discharge of duty. In a government of influence and affection, no less than in a government of force, laws are silent and inoperative. Unyielding firmness, and, as far as possible, uniformity in the administration of discipline, are more effectual than severe penalties. Decision and courage are always respectable, and established usage is often more venerated than justice and reason.

These, it will be readily admitted, are but palliatives of an evil which is inherent in the prevailing systems of college discipline. It is worthy of an inquiry, perhaps of an experiment, whether a more radical improvement may not be attained, by a nearer approximation to that parental discipline which nature has prescribed for the government of youth. The college code might be limited to those prudential regulations which are necessary to facilitate the ordinary operations of study and instruction, and to a few flagrant crimes which are so unequivocal in their tendencies or positive guilt, as to disqualify the offender for the society and privileges of the institution. Over minor offences, and over the general police of the college, there might be given to the faculty, under proper restrictions, a broad and general discretion, to supercede the multitude of vexatious enactments which uniformly operate as provocatives to transgression. Such a system would speedily degenerate into turbulence or tyranny, under a weak or unprincipled administration. The utmost circumspection would be requisite in appointing the officers

of instruction, and upon them would be imposed additional and painful responsibilities. But no labors or difficulties should be refused which promise a remedy, or even an alleviation, of a great and increasing evil.

The frequent arraignment of students upon charges of petty delinquency, is a fruitful source of corruption which would be, at least, partially removed by absolving them from allegiance to the chapter of crimes and punishments, and holding them accountable for their conduct upon the common obligations of morality and duty. Such occasions often present temptations to prevarication and falsehood, too strong to be resisted by ordinary minds, and a trial before the faculty has often produced a ruinous prostration of self-respect and all honorable feeling. The same objection, in a higher degree, exists against that most unreasonable custom which denies to a student, who has been dismissed for misconduct, admission into any other institution. This needless severity adds nothing to the efficacy of punishment, whilst it destroys the strongest motives to reformation. It may be advisable to dismiss a student, for an offence or a course of conduct, which indicates no very deep or incurable depravity. Under more favorable circumstances, and with more fortunate associations, he may become virtuous and respectable. It might be dangerous for a college to open its doors to those who, by common consent, are excluded from the privileges of education; but the highest considerations of humanity and justice require, that none should be consigned to disgrace and perpetual disability, who are not already lost to virtue and to hope. A private intimation to the parent, to withdraw an idle or a profligate son, would secure the ends of discipline without the infliction of injustice or ignominy.

Of the whole number of those who enter college, it is believed that less than half remain to complete their education. The majority are arrested in their career of improvement by idle or vicious habits; by extravagance and discontent, and sometimes, by unwise laws and mal-administration. This result of the prevailing systems of public instruction, is truly appalling. That a subject so full of thrilling interest,

has received so little attention, in this age of inquiry and bold innovation, is perhaps to be ascribed to its intrinsic difficulties. No place, however, can be given to despondency in a great practical movement for the virtue and happiness of mankind ; and difficulties only present stronger motives for persevering exertion, to those who are entrusted with the education of youth.

Co-operation with the administration of college discipline on the part of parents, would remove some of the sources of vice and profligacy. No sumptuary regulations can be enforced to any good effect, without their aid, and all experience shows that simplicity in dress and strict economy in expenditures of money, are intimately connected with industry, sobriety and the other virtues of a student. The youth who is improvidently supplied with the means of acquiring an easy superiority over his associates, by ostentatious liberality and exterior decorations, is not likely to pursue, with much eagerness, the more slow and laborious distinction conferred by eminent literary acquirements. In some of our institutions of learning, this subject has been regarded of such vital importance, that the dress of the student is prescribed and his expenses regulated by law. I am not well informed what success has followed the adoption of these measures ; but there are so many ways by which such restrictions may be eluded by youthful ingenuity, when aided by the indulgence of the parent, that their efficacy seems to be wholly dependent upon his concurrence. If experience is found to confirm this probable conclusion, it will be better to leave the whole matter to the parents' discretion, and thus avoid another occasion of exercising the youthful mind in artifice and evasion.

The connexion of manual labor with study, which promises more auspicious results than any improvement in education since the days of Raikes, will afford a safeguard against some of the depraving influences that operate in our institutions of learning. The substitution of manly and useful employments for the frivolous and often corrupting amusements which usually occupy the hours of relaxation

from study, will tend to correct the exuberance of boyish feeling, and to impart a soberness of mind and habits, every way friendly to good morals and intellectual improvement. Habitual and vigorous participation in the common pursuits of mankind, will prevent the false views and sickly sensibilities which are nourished by studious or indolent seclusion, and keep alive a proper sympathy for the homely and practical realities of life, which are never contemned without great danger to virtue and happiness.

Time and experience may modify my views upon this interesting subject, but I confess that I look to the general introduction of manual labor, for a great and salutary reformation in the morals and government of our schools of learning. The obvious and acknowledged advantages of this system have already secured its adoption by many respectable colleges and academies. It promotes health and a sound constitution, by regular and vigorous exercise. It imparts habits of industry and a knowledge of the useful arts, and diminishes the expenses of education. These objects are of high and general importance, but they possess a peculiar interest, when considered in reference to the domestic institutions of the southern states. No part of the world is more favorable to the full development of the physical constitution. Indolence and effeminacy cannot be the vices of our pure and invigorating climate, nor are our people insensible to the value of industry and its attendant blessings. The greatest difficulty is, however, experienced in training up our youth to habits so essential to their virtue and happiness. If they mingle with the blacks in the labors of the field, it is at the risque of injury to both manners and morals, and under circumstances usually corrupting to both parties. Many judicious and conscientious parents prefer the alternative of idleness and exposure to such temptations and amusements as chance may offer or inclination solicit. Under the influence of such examples, labor becomes disreputable in the estimation of the young, and parents are often deterred from sending their sons to public institutions of learning, from a well grounded fear that they may acquire habits and feelings which will dis-

qualify them for engaging, with satisfaction, in those agricultural or mechanical pursuits to which they are destined. To both of these great evils, the manual labor system proposes an efficient remedy. The sons of the rich are accustomed to healthful and virtuous industry, without hazard to their morals. The sons of the poor are trained up in valuable knowledge, without learning to condemn the labors of the field or the workshop.

There is another aspect of this subject which gives it peculiar claims upon our attention. Liberal education is comparatively dear in the southern states, and its benefits are almost wholly confined to the sons of our more opulent citizens. In other parts of the country, where labor is honorable and profitable and education cheap, many poor young men defray the whole expense of a collegiate course, by their own industry. Such examples, if they ever occur, are very rare in the slave holding states. The popular mind is not excited to action by the strong stimulus of thorough elementary instruction, and if the impulses of an ennobling ambition are felt by the aspiring but unportioned youth, they are often repressed by the appalling difficulties that throng his way to knowledge and distinction. An improvement in our literary institutions, such as the manual labor system proposes, by which the enterprising and the resolute may be enabled to educate themselves, offers the readiest and the best, and probably, the only means of intellectual culture and moral elevation to the most important, because the most numerous class of society—a class to which the community must chiefly look for competent teachers, and the church for able ministers.

I offer no apology for giving to the discussion of this subject a brief portion of the time allotted to the present occasion. It is intimately connected with the vital interests of education, and with the brightest hopes of the world, and it can never be too earnestly pressed upon the consideration of those who are providing the means of instruction for the rising generation. Religion and patriotism must concur in giving

the preference to that system of education which extends its full blessings to the largest portion of the people, and calls forth from the sober ranks of laborious industry, the greatest number of hardy auxiliaries for the various enterprizes of philanthropy and piety. A literary institution, to meet the wants and the claims of the age, should reduce the charges of education to the lowest possible amount. It should enjoin habits of strict economy by all the weight of influence, and if practicable, of authority. It should establish a department for manual labor, where indigent young men may defray, at least, a part of their expenses by their own exertions. If, in addition to these regulations, a provision should be made like that which has been adopted by the Wesleyan University, giving to any who may offer sufficient security for the ultimate payment of principal and interest, a credit for the college charges till one or two years after their graduation, nothing would be wanting to the perfection of a charity, the noblest in its objects and the most beneficent in its tendencies.

I am happy to know, that the general principle, upon which these suggestions are founded, has been fully recognized by the Trustees of Randolph-Macon College. They have wisely prescribed a thorough and extensive course of study, for those who aspire to the honors of graduation. At the same time, they freely admit to the several departments of instruction such persons as are led by pecuniary circumstances, by age or inclination, to prefer more partial or more specific objects of inquiry. They offer every facility for acquiring a liberal education, on terms accommodated to the means of a large portion of the community, whose sons have hitherto been excluded from the benefits of collegiate instruction. It was indeed to be expected, that an institution which had its origin in the public spirit and pious liberality of the people, would be peculiarly adapted to their circumstances and wants. If, in its future progress, experience shall suggest the necessity of more ample provisions, it cannot be doubted that the board will faithfully redeem the pledge which they have already given, and employ all their

resources to extend to the poor as well as the rich, the full advantages of this noble enterprize.

It becomes the religious denomination, under whose auspices this youthful seminary has speedily risen to vigor and usefulness, to prosecute its benevolent objects, with the most zealous perseverance. We have been called to engage in the business of education, by omens of no doubtful import, and it rests upon us, with all the imperative urgency of a christian obligation. We have come tardily to the work, and it the more behooves us to prosecute it with a diligent and vigorous hand. In our burning zeal to propagate the gospel, we seem to have overlooked minor interests. By the blessing of God, we have pressed into every open door, and planted our doctrines and churches in every neighborhood, throughout the entire Union. Along the whole unmeasured length of frontier which skirts this vast Republic, our banner waves in the van of emigration, and we have even raised the trophies of the cross beyond the remotest limits of civilization. In the midst of these cheering successes, we are suddenly roused as from a long reverie, to a sense of new and appalling responsibilities. The children of the four millions of people who attend upon the ministrations of our church, call upon us for the means of education. Surely I do not misinterpret the signs of the times, when I say the church will respond to this affecting appeal. She owes it to her character; to her interest; to self-preservation. She owes it to the land which has yielded her so plenteous a harvest, and to the people who have greeted her with so cordial a welcome. She owes it to our republican institutions, and above all, to the immortal destinies which God has committed to her care. The church will do her duty. The sacred obligation of engaging in the work of education is felt and acknowledged. The spirit of liberality is increasing, and the most unequivocal evidence is given of a great revolution in public sentiment upon this subject. Besides a number of academies established upon an extensive and liberal scale, four colleges are already successfully engaged in diffusing the blessings of education under the patronage and control



of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Two more are expected shortly to go into operation under flattering prospects. These institutions are the offspring of individual bounty.

The Virginia Conference, if not the first to engage in this good work, has emulated the example of her younger sisters of the west, with a zeal and liberality worthy of her character and of the cause. The first fruits of her enlightened and pious exertions are now before us. A commodious and splendid edifice adapted to all the purposes of collegiate instruction; a good collection of minerals; a select and increasing library; competent and experienced professors who already enjoy the confidence of the public, and nearly one hundred pupils, assembled from four or five different states, in the halls of science, bear testimony to the vigorous infancy and favorable prospects of an institution which was opened but a little more than a year ago. In the mean time, new friends are rising up to promote and share its prosperity. The South Carolina and Georgia Conferences, have each resolved to endow a professorship for the benefit of this College, and to establish, within their limits, preparatory schools, upon the manual labor plan. The work of raising funds has been committed to intelligent and efficient agents, and the appeal is made to a liberal people, who know and appreciate the value of education.

These are all encouraging circumstances. But in coming, as I do upon the present occasion, to dedicate my humble powers to this enterprize of philanthropy and religion, I derive my most cheering hopes of success from another source. I derive them from a firm and cherished confidence, that this institution will live and flourish in the prayers of the righteous. The preachers of the gospel will be its advocates, and throughout the wide field of their labors, its interests will be remembered in the intercessions of the congregation. They will be borne to the throne of grace on humble and contrite hearts, in the devotions of the family and the closet. God, who heareth prayer, will send his spirit to guide the teachers and the pupils.